



Erie County  
Department of  
Health



Public Health  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH ADVISORY:

### Extended Power Outages and Perishable Food Storage

#### Refrigerators/Walk-in Coolers:

Refrigeration units (regardless of make) will not *reliably* maintain refrigeration temperatures ( $\leq 45^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) for longer than 4 hours without continuous electric service.

All potentially hazardous food (PHF)\* in these units **MUST BE DISCARDED** if the electric service was interrupted for 4 continuous hours or longer.

#### Freezers (including walk-in units):

Fully stocked freezers (especially chest and walk-in styles) may maintain temperatures  $\leq 32^{\circ}\text{F}$  for up to 48 hours without continuous electric service.

Partially/Half-stocked freezers may maintain temperatures  $\leq 32^{\circ}\text{F}$  for up to 24 hours.

All PHF in these units must be carefully evaluated with a probe-style food thermometer for proper temperature maintenance before use. PHF found to be partially frozen (exhibiting ice-crystals) may be re-frozen. Thawed PHF found to be  $\leq 45^{\circ}\text{F}$  may be used or treated as a refrigerated product and maintained at  $\leq 45^{\circ}\text{F}$ , and must be used as soon as possible. Thawed PHF foods found to be  $> 45^{\circ}\text{F}$  **MUST BE DISCARDED**.

#### If Flooding/Water Back-up Occurs:

- Discard all foods (not just PHF) and packaging materials that have been submerged in water, unless the food is sealed in a hermetically sealed can that has not been damaged. This includes DISCARDING:
  - Products in containers with screw-caps, snap-lids, crimped-caps (i.e. beer/soda bottles), twist-caps, flip-tops, snap-open, similar type closures that have been submerged in water.
  - Refrigerated and frozen foods which have been submerged in water, except for retort pouches (i.e. vacuum packed pouches)-contact this Department for the requirements necessary to salvage these items.
  - Products packed in plastic, paper, cardboard, cloth, and similar containers that have been submerged in water.

## **Summary:**

- **Discard all PHF that have been in the “Danger Zone” (between 45°F and 140°F) for 4 hours or more**
- **Do not re-freeze thawed food**
- **Discard foods and other products submerged in flood/back-up waters**
- **When in Doubt, Throw it Out!**
- **You cannot rely solely on appearance or odor to determine if a food will make someone sick**
- **The risk of Food Poisoning (and the associated liability) is never worth the cost of the food!**

*\*Potentially Hazardous Food is any food that consists in whole or in part of milk or milk products, eggs, meat, poultry, fish, shellfish, edible crustacean, cooked potato, cooked rice or other ingredients, including synthetic ingredients, in a form capable of supporting: (1) rapid and progressive growth of infectious, or toxigenic microorganisms; or (2) the slower growth of C. Botulinum.*

## **Checklist for Re-Opening the Establishment**

- ☐ Hot and cold potable water available under pressure
- ☐ All hand-washing and toilet facilities are fully operational
- ☐ Electric and gas service operational
- ☐ Refrigeration and freezer units are fully operational and holding temperature
- ☐ Hot holding units fully operational
- ☐ Proper cleaning and sanitizing facilities operational
- ☐ Adequate and approved lighting operational
- ☐ All PHF which has been out of temperature for 4 or more hours has been discarded
- ☐ Frozen foods thawed due to power outage not re-frozen
- ☐ All food contact equipment that was submerged in water has been cleaned and sanitized

**FOR MORE INFORMATION OR ADVICE, CONTACT:**

**ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

**(716) 961-6800**

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